

## Article by Brian Fingerson for KBRC

We all know that we may see patients who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Do we recognize it in them? Can we say we'd recognize this disease in a colleague? If we do recognize it, then what do we do? Let's begin with a definition and some signs and symptoms:

Addiction to drugs including alcohol:

- A primary, chronic, neurobiological disease, with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. It is characterized by behaviors that include one or more of the following:
- Impaired control over drug use
- Compulsive use
- Continued use despite harm
- Craving

### Warning Signs of Abuse and Dependency

**Usage Increase** - Over time, it is common for individuals taking prescription medications to grow tolerant to the effects of their prescribed dose. Increased dosage often indicates that the original amount is no longer providing relief.

**Change in Personality** - Changes in a person's normal behavior can be a sign of dependency. Shifts in energy, mood, and concentration may occur as everyday responsibilities become secondary to the need for the relief the prescription provides.

**Social Withdrawal** - A person experiencing a dependency problem may withdraw from family, friends, and other social interaction.

**Ongoing Use** - Patients that complain frequently about "still feeling pain" or request to extend a prescription long after the medical condition has improved should be monitored closely. Those who gripe about doctors refusing to write a prescription show signs of dependency.

**Going to Great Lengths to Obtain Prescriptions** - A dependent person may spend large amounts of time driving great distances and visiting multiple doctors to obtain drugs. Preoccupation with a quest for medication demonstrates that the drug has become a top priority.

**Change in Appearance** - Personal hygiene may diminish as a result of a drug addiction. Significant weight loss may occur and glazed eyes may be evident.

**Desensitized Emotions** - A dependent person may exhibit an attitude of indifference, a lack of emotion, and demonstrate disinterest in things that previously brought them pleasure.

**Increased Inactivity** - Hobbies and activities no longer provide the enjoyment they used to. Those suffering from dependency may feel lethargic and tend to stop engaging in athletic activities.

**Blackouts and Forgetfulness** - Another clear indication of dependence is when the person regularly forgets events that have taken place and appears to be suffering frequent blackouts.

**Defensiveness** - Abusers who attempt to hide a drug dependency may lash out and become very defensive if they feel their secret is being discovered.

If you recognize any of these signs and symptoms in a colleague, you may refer them for help to the profession's program that assists those with this disease to get the help needed to treat the disease and then monitor their recovery. **You may call the KY Professionals Recovery Network – Brian Fingerson, RPh @ 502-749-8385 or email @ [kyprn@insightbb.com](mailto:kyprn@insightbb.com) for assistance.**